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ABSTRACT

Decentralization efforts in Australia after the publishing of the "Better Schools" report in 1987 are described in this paper. An overview of the implementation process concludes that the transition is halfway completed. However, the process has encountered strong resistance. Authority to determine the means, but not ends, was devolved to states by the federal government. Barriers to implementation include teacher union opposition, different definitions of school autonomy, the role of principals, and the politicization of education. A paradox is that the purpose of restructuring is effective resource utilization by schools, yet the inability to do so threatens implementation. A conclusion is that restructuring will be achieved, but must overcome the cultural, historical tradition of central management and the appeal of expedient central government action for decisive problem solving. Recommendations are made for outcome-based criteria for evaluating success and presenting restructuring as a means for professional advancement. (9 references) (LMI)

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MAKING BETTER SCHOOLS: DEVOLUTION THE SECOND TIME AROUND

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SYMPOSIUM: TOWARDS AUTONOMOUS SCHOOLS IN DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION SYSTEMS; AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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REFORM THROUGH DEVOLUTION: COMMONWEALTH AND STATE ATTEMPTS

The Commonwealth Experiment: A First Attempt at Devolution

Devolution of decision-making within the state public school systems was a key plank of the Commonwealth Government programs designed to improve Australian education during the seventies and early eighties. In the blueprint for reform, Schools in Australia, there was the clearly stated assumption that schools would be better places if the centralized control of schools by State education authorities were loosened. (Karmel, 1973). This was a radical notion: since the late nineteenth century public schooling was provided for the substantial majority of children through centrally organised state school systems. The maintenance of a highly centralized administration seemed the only way in which education of comparable quality could be guaranteed within each of the States.

Commencing in 1973, the Commonwealth authorities, through the newly established Schools Commission, injected a huge increase in funding into an arena that had hitherto been occupied solely by the States. While the funding was welcomed by the States, the conditional acceptance of Commonwealth priorities and values was not. The devolution proposals were regarded as an attack on the authority of state systems and were contested vigorously, initially, though more desultorily, once it became clear that there was likely to be little change in the balance of power.

Although the Commonwealth reforms arose from the assessment of the financial needs of schools the promotion of devolution was not rooted in the economic

rationalism that was to overtake thinking a decade later. The rationale, put simply in Schools in Australia, states that the

> grass-roots approach to the control of schools reflects a conviction that responsibility will be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with working decisions are also the people responsible for carrying them out, with an obligation to justify them, and in a position to profit from their experience. (p.10)

The devolution objective was advanced through special purpose programs for disadvantaged students and through a program promoting innovation. (Karmel, 1973). Funding was disbursed to schools via state and local committees, comprised mostly of school and community personnel; the committees largely bypassed the state department offices. In most cases state authorities were ready to accept the funding, and quibbled over detail before allowing school-initiated proposals to proceed. As it eventuated, very few proposals directly challenged the central decision-making authority of state departments. The Schools Commission sought to achieve its devolution goals by changing the culture of school systems rather than provoking a head-on clash between the Commonwealth and the states over organizational structures. Several of the special purpose programs were abolished after a decade of operation though the programs for the support of disadvantaged children continue to function.

It is difficult to assess the impact of the devolution push of the Commonwealth. At best, the effects seem to have been marginal. In the case of Western Australia, school projects funded by the Innovations Program led to some system-wide policy changes. For example, schools can now use their own funds to purchase buses, a contravention of previous central policy which opposed this development on cost-benefit grounds. Other examples of this order

and kind can be found, but institutionally, schools remained much the same and the Central Office continued as firmly in control as ever. The programs had been accommodated within the central bureaucracy and their radical intent never fully realised.

The Better Schools Report: State Government Initiated Reform

Ironically, fourteen years after the publication of the Commonwealth's Schools in Australia, the State Government of Western Australia issued, in January 1987, Better Schools, a report recommending the devolution of decision-making from the central bureaucracy to schools. According to the report, the corner-stone of the restructuring should be the "self-determining" school. The report urged the replacement of direct, centralized control by broader macro controls which would enable schools to exercise autonomy over their management in pursuit of system-wide objectives. Symbolically, the Education Department was to be replaced by a "Ministry of Education". In a system of 750 schools, spread over a third of the continent, and with a history of highly centralized decision-making, the reforms proposed the in Better Schools report are the most radical this century.

The Western Australian reforms are not unique; similar developments are occurring throughout the country. Every state education authority is moving along the devolution path. In all cases, with the possible exception of the State of Victoria, the push has been top down and has emerged from government commitment to the reform of public sector management in general as much as from a concern for the quality of education per se. In contrast with the earlier

attempt at devolution, the Commonwealth Government has played no part in the promotion of devolution the second time around. Nor for that matter has there been any national co-ordination or promotion; there is no national guru, definitive literature or key sponsoring agency. The core ideas spread like an epidemic across systems and state boundaries. Labor and conservative state governments are following similar courses. There are as yet no discernable differences of a party-political kind: the ideology of devolution and its expression in management terms are basically the same across systems.

The motives of the state governments are plain enough though have not always been made explicit: governments are under pressure to improve and extend services; the education sector consumes between a third and a quarter of state expenditure; the enterprise is run by management practices developed during a more affluent era; efficiencies can be found by reducing the size of the central bureaucracies (which grew dramatically during the 70s and 80s) and by giving staff at the school site level more control over the deployment of resources. The underlying purpose of the reforms was not to cut education expenditure but to get better value for it recognizing that for the foreseeable future governments could expect to find increasing difficulty in raising revenue to meet rising costs of public services.

The paradigm, which is being applied across the public sector, can be expressed simply in terms of means and ends. There are four steps:

1 a clear articulation by central authorities of the desired ends;

2 the provision of resources to local authorities conditional upon agreement to achieve the stated ends;

3 empowerment of local authorities to determine the means; and

4 further central provision of resources conditional upon the demonstration by local authorities of progress towards the achievement of the agreed ends.

In the education context, the government was not intent upon devolving to schools the authority to determine what the ends should be. Quite the opposite. Underpinning the paradigm is the belief that better performance will result from sharper focusing on systemic priorities. What is being devolved to schools is the authority (and the capacity) to determine the way in which the school will achieve the agreed outcomes.

The Machinery for Devolution

State education authorities across Australia have adopted similar machinery in order to put their devolution proposals into effect:

- a mandatory development plan in each school (in effect, the school's corporate plan);

- single line budgets/block grants for schools containing funds previously allocated centrally for specific purposes;

- formally constituted school decision-making groups, containing staff and community representatives, which endorse plans and authorise budgets;

- an external auditing capacity which has an educational as well as financial remit;

- central offices more focused than in the past on defining policy parameters and standards; and

- decentralized support services for schools based either in schools in local offices.

The language and form of the apparatus have varied. For example South Australia has established a special office of evaluators-come-inspectors to 'audit' a school's performance whereas Western Australia has a locally based superintendent to undertake these functions. The powers of school decision groups (or school councils as they are also called) vary from state to state. School support services are also organised differently.

It is interesting to compare the origins of the Australian movement towards devolution with the U.S.. In the latter, the literature suggests that the interest in school-based management has arisen from within an orthodox school improvement paradigm which emphasises local ownership or empowerment and stresses the importance of regarding the school as the most productive unit for managing educational change. (David, 1989). School-based management appears

to be a convenient concept for collecting together conventional wisdom and educational research findings about how 'good' schools operate. In the Western Australian case the origins are found in the drive to reform public sector management with its focus on efficiency and the better use of existing resources. The language used to describe the devolution machinery and the restructuring has the ring of corporate managerialism (audit, performance appraisal, corporate plan, performance indicators and so on). However, it would be inaccurate to describe Better Schools as a straightforward example of economic rationalism. Incorporated in the Better Schools ideology is the belief that quality of education will improve when the responsibility for problem solving is shifted from the central bureaucracy to the school or individual. The assumption that school improvement can be better achieved through local control is the under-exposed side of the Better Schools reforms.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Aftermath of the Release of the Better Schools Report

In Western Australia the release of the Better Schools report was met with bewilderment and protest. The genesis of the report was a functional review of the Education Department carried out by an agency independent of the Department and answerable to the Government. The Education Department was the twenty-seventh Government instrumentality to be so examined and by far the largest. The review, contrary to conventional practice in the education sector, was neither open nor participative. The full report was not made public. Teachers were not prepared for the abridged version, Better Schools,

nor for its immediate endorsement by the Government. Their concerns were immediately taken up by the State Teachers' Union. From day one the reform program was represented by its opponents as conspiratorial, anti-educational and impracticable.

Teachers, in general, saw no need for radical restructuring. From their perspective the system did not appear to be in crisis. Most were satisfied with the existing system subject to some fine-tuning. Further, teachers were well down the track with the implementation of a more conventional report and in secondary schools in particular were tired as a result of that effort. The educational bureaucracy itself was little better prepared. There had been no proselytising prior to the release of the report if for no other reason than that only a small circle of Government advisers and officials were familiar with the report's contents. Hence the implementation began in defiance of most of the conventional principles governing the smooth introduction of organizational change. Whether the implementation could have begun otherwise is a moot point. It seems doubtful that a report so uncompromising in its commitment to devolution could have been produced had there been widespread consultation with the education establishment although, on the other hand, the recommendations could have been more clearly articulated and positively represented to teachers had it not been released so pre-emptorily.

The Status of the Implementation

The report itself proposed a five-year time-line for the full implementation. In effect, teachers were told that the key objectives of the report were not

negotiable though the manner of implementation and the time-lines were subject to review. Three years on, the report card reads as follows:

- The restructuring of the central and district offices is well advanced though the promise to halve the Central Office bureaucracy is a long way from being met - there is still a strong centrifugal pull in the way the system operates.

- Legislation has been passed enabling school decision-making groups to operate; most schools have begun to establish these groups; some have sophisticated structures.

- School development plan guidelines have been issued and most schools have some kind of plan ranging from rudimentary to sophisticated.

- School funding is being consolidated into a single grant and phased in over three years; it is expected that the full operating costs of schools will be incorporated into the grant by 1992.

- The development of the audit function has lagged; district superintendents, the auditing agents, have been unable to assume their role in a practical sense because schools have not yet acquired the means of accounting for their performance. The school development plan is seen as the key instrument for this purpose.

The most contentious area has been school staffing. There has been strong

Union opposition to the notion of local staff selection or indeed any interference to the highly complex, centralized staffing process which governs promotion and appointment to the more and less desirable locations in the State. In the face of strong teacher opposition, the Government's commitment to this recommendation in the report was withdrawn so that at least for the time-being schools will not be self-determining with regard to the recruitment, appointment and deployment of staff - the school's key resource.

At this time the implementation is poised about halfway towards completion. Not all the infrastructure is in place. The organization is operating with elements of a devolved and a centralized system and has the virtues of neither. Selling the strengths of devolution has been difficult while the system remains in this unfinished state.

Accounting for the Progress

Setting aside the way in which the Better Schools report was formulated and released there are other reasons which explain the rocky start.

- The report came hard on the heels of another wide-scale review of the education system, the Beazley Report, which contained a mammoth 272 recommendations for change and improvement. (Beazley, 1984). The Beazley Report focused mostly on curriculum change and assumed that the organizational structures of the education system would stay intact. The implementation of changes to the secondary school curriculum were in full

swing when the Better Schools report was released. In the minds of many teachers, taken together the proposals of the two reports constituted too much change and too much work imposed too quickly.

. The State Teachers' Union opposed the report, initially because of the decision of the Government not to consult it regarding the changes, but later for various philosophical and political reasons. The basis of the opposition was often vague or speculative since the Better Schools report was a slim document describing what needed to be done while remaining silent on the detail how the changes should take effect. However, more generally underpinning union opposition was the fear that devolution of authority would lead to deregulation of industrial practices and accords with the consequential weakening of the centralized union decision-making structure. While education authorities were espousing the rhetoric of devolution the Teachers' Union leaders were oppositional or circumspect at best.

. During 1989 Commonwealth and state governments issued radical new wage fixing guidelines which required industries to demonstrate improvements in structural efficiencies in order to gain salaries increases. Teachers were of the view that in real terms their salaries had been eroded over the past decade while at the same time they had already borne the brunt of substantial restructuring. Their claim for special treatment was not supported by the Government or accepted by the State Industrial Commission and they resorted to industrial action. The Better Schools changes, which were starting to grip, became a bargaining chip in the fight for salary

increases. The Teachers' Union gained strong support for the policy of a moratorium on change until its members were back-paid for the restructuring already done.

The translation of theory into practice turned out to be conceptually and practically more difficult than initially envisaged. There were no pilot projects and no system models elsewhere sufficiently advanced to learn from. Central Office staff were expected to turn the Better Schools report into an implementation document from the early days; this was hard to accomplish quickly since virtually every feature of the former Education Department required redefinition and clarification. Staff at all levels faced uncertainty and ambiguity with the net result that some sidelined themselves and adopted a "wait and see" attitude.

UNRESOLVED PROBLEM AREAS

Relationship Between Principals and the Central Bureaucracy

One of the constant tensions since 1987 has been the definition of the limits of the school's autonomy. Some teachers took the slogan "self-determining schools" to mean literally just that - unlimited autonomy without regard for system-wide policy parameters and agreed standards. Subsequent attempts by the Central Office to define the policy parameters have been regarded as an infringement of the school's responsibility. The Central Office is caught in a classic Catch 22 position: the more reticent it remains regarding the

delineation of the policy framework the more it encourages the position that self-determining schools can ignore systemic accountability; on the other hand, the further it proceeds with the delineation the greater the criticism that Better Schools is fraudulent and designed to limit the authority of schools. School staffs so far have not recognized that the definition of their responsibilities can be to their advantage.

School principals are at the nub of this dilemma. The intended relationship being the principal of a self-determining school and the executive of the Central Office remains problematic.

Until 1987 the responsibilities for the management of schools were conveniently diffuse. The system ran to a large extent on good will and on the understanding that the Director-General had the authority to direct school staff on most matters (these powers were rarely invoked). Some 70 or so superintendents, superordinate to principals in the organisational hierarchy, travelled about schools seldom challenging the school principal though able to do so. In effect principals shared responsibility with superintendents for the running of their school. For example, superintendents assessed staff, determined transfers and evaluated the curriculum; principals managed the day-to-day operations.

The Better Schools restructuring sought to do away with the ambiguity. According to its doctrine the principal has end of line responsibility for the management of the school and must guarantee the end product. Each principal is

accountable to a single superintendent for his/her performance. Superintendents themselves are accountable to the Executive. While on paper the line management is flat and unambiguous, in practice the relationship between superintendent and principal remains uneasy and obscure. Superintendents see themselves clearly as part of the organization's management structure whereas principals do not, partly because their organizational responsibilities and status have never previously been spelled out, and they reject this new definition, but primarily because the concept of principal as a member of the organization's middle management, yet at the same time leader of a self-determining school, seems incongruous or contradictory.

The new structure was tested during 1989 in an intensive and often bitter industrial campaign over salaries, led by the Teachers' Union. For the first time in fifty years teachers in Western Australia went on a general strike. Principals lined up with their teachers in a demonstration of solidarity against the Government and Central Office management. There was a cleavage within the organization between the level of superintendent and principal. The problem facing the Government is how to manage an organisation which has such a disjunction and at the same time promote devolution among schools.

One approach to solving this problem would be to more clearly establish principals as middle and senior level managers and weld the Central Office via this means to the schools.

Principals would be employed under conditions similar to other Central Office

employees. Senior, school-based staff could also be given the same status so that school and Central Office management clearly represented the interests of a single unified organization distributed over a large number of sites. Schools would by these means become part of a more tightly coupled organization. Under these circumstances schools would be self-determining to the extent that central management withdrew from micro decision-making about school operations.

Teachers would regard this latter course with suspicion - the notion of teachers as public servants is alien and its introduction would be seen as a ruse to impose governmental control on schools.

The second approach under consideration is to come to terms with the structural separation of schools and Central Office rather than try and mend it. The strategy would require the development of a different kind of organization - a confederation of 750 Government schools, each led by a Chief Executive who is accountable to the government through some contractual basis which sets out agreed systemic priorities and goals. The Central Office would constitute a minimal bureaucracy that enables the system to work rather than be the core of the organization.

To reconfigure the school system into seven or eight hundred autonomous institutions bound to a central bureaucracy by performance agreements or contracts would constitute a radical departure from the status quo and probably be no more popular among principals and teachers than the alternative tightening of organizational structures. Further, as long as staffing remains a central function the concept is not fully realisable. However, supposing

that each school could be self-governing with regard to human and financial resources, it would theoretically be possible to transform the existing system into a networked association of schools, not unlike the associations of private schools that educate about a quarter of the State's school children. Recent reforms in New Zealand seem directed to move that country's schools down such a path. (Picot, 1988).

The choice of direction is of critical strategic importance. Should the principal be attached more closely to the central management structure or more formally detached from it? Each option represents a distinctive shift from the status quo which has prevailed whereby principals in some loosely defined respects are responsible for the management of their schools and in other respects are not, and in which under some circumstances occupy a line management position in the organizational structure and in other circumstances do not.

The principal as chief executive is the course most consistent with the ideology of Better Schools, but from the Government's point of view, it is the most hazardous. Empowering 750 principals as chief executives with full and unambiguous responsibility for school management may be seen as a recipe for organizational anarchy particularly if introduced in the present climate of uncertainty. The central bureaucracy, with its history of tight control, would also find it difficult to accept, not only because it goes against the grain to give power away, but also because it has traditionally been finally accountable for the performance of schools. There would be fears that Central Office would

continue to be publicly responsible for the performance of errant chief executive-come-principals. Letting go power requires as much finesse as grabbing it. But sitting still is not the answer.

The Role of Government in the Management of the School System

One of the precepts underpinning the Government's drive to improve public sector management is the understanding that elected governments have the responsibility of establishing policy and that public service bureaucracies have the job of putting the policy into effect. (Burke, 1986). In education, where the departmental bureaucracies had been largely left to their own devices to establish education policy, the recent insistence of Government that policy setting is its prerogative has been regarded by many teachers as intrusive and evidence of the politicisation of education. The Better Schools report is often cited as a prime example of that politicisation.

The central educational bureaucracy has been put on the spot because of this development. In steadfastly promoting Government policy it has been criticized for being in the Government's pocket, particularly when the policies it promotes are not popular among teachers. The advocacy by the central bureaucracy on behalf of teachers within Government is neither public nor visible with the consequence that school staffs have increasingly felt alienated from, or distrustful of, the Central Office. The devolution proposals have exacerbated these feelings. The effort to reduce the dependencies of schools on the Central Office through devolution has been

misinterpreted as evidence of the selling out of schools.

Teachers in Western Australia, unlike public servants, who staff the Central Office, have the legal right to publicly criticize Government policies and practice. The Government has the power to require teachers to carry out lawful directions. These powers, of teachers to use the media to criticize Government (or the Central Office), and of Government to require teachers to implement policy, are rarely exercised, but they provide an important backdrop for the devolution proposals. The intention of Better Schools is not to enhance the capacity of schools to oppose the Government of the day either through media criticism or defiance of policy implementation. Yet if school staffs do not accept the entitlement of Government to establish educational policies and priorities, the devolution of greater power and responsibility to schools may mean that the Government is making a rod for its own back. If principals, given the powers of chief executives, decide to reject the corporate line, and have the means of doing so, the public school system will not be manageable.

The Impact of the Reforms on Workload

One unintended outcome of the Commonwealth reforms of the 70's and 80's was the reinforcement of the notion that school improvement is achieved through the accretion of functions and structures rather than through the redesign of the work that schools do. The immediate availability of substantial funding prompted the quickest and easiest solutions to schools' problems - add-ons. The functions and superstructure of the Central Office and individual schools grew

rapidly in this environment and so commensurately did the complexity of their management.

The Better Schools proposals called for a streamlining of the Central Office and devolution of responsibility to schools. In effect, what has happened is that the Central Office found it easiest to devolve workloads to schools and has been unable (at least temporarily) to sever responsibility for the functions at either the school or Central Office level. The net effect has been that schools have been asked to do more with only marginal increases in resources, the Central office has hung on to the control, and as new priority areas for change have emerged, found itself reverting to the expansion of the central bureaucracy. In addition to the various Beazley Committee changes, school staff have had to contend with the development of the devolution mechanisms. The effect of these on workload has been cumulative.

Where schools have sought their own solutions in keeping with the rhetoric of the Better Schools report they have faced an uphill battle. There are several reasons. First, they have encountered a plethora of bureaucratic constraints chiefly of an industrial and legal kind. Both the unions and Ministry have been reluctant to establish more flexible conditions of work that would enhance local problem solving. The Teachers' Union feared that local solutions would create working conditions that were not uniform across the system and therefore not equally shared by members; the Union also feared solutions that might impose tougher work loads. Sections of the Central Office were concerned that flexibility would make the system less manageable. Second, the culture of the organization has not nurtured risk-takers: compliance with central

prescription has been the norm. Third, rather than shredding red tape central authorities have appeared more intent on reissuing it: there is a strong disposition to retain a system of micro controls. Hence, there has been a continuation of the work pressure build-up. As long as little progress is made with the workload problem the viability of the whole body of reforms is threatened. Even enterprising school staffs, with a commitment to the concepts of devolution, are wilting under the pressure.

There have been several responses to this problem: one has been to consider a moratorium on change; another has been to extend the implementation timelines; a third has been to put additional resources into schools (administrative staff, computers, etc). The answer most likely lies in fundamental reviews by school staffs of functions with the prospect of pruning and internal restructuring. (Ashenden, 1990). However, for this to work there will need to be overt support and tolerance for error from Government, the central bureaucracy and unions. So far, pronouncements of the kind that managers should seek to effect change within existing resources, have been found to be hollow; though experts abound the expertise is found wanting and system level authorities, both Ministry and union, have been discouraging of local problem solving.

There is more than a touch of irony in the fact that the raison d'etre of the restructuring is to enable schools to use existing resources more effectively yet the implementation is being threatened because so far they have been unable to do so.

PROGNOSIS

Will the intentions of the Better Schools restructuring be finally achieved? The answer is 'yes', but it will be tough going.

It seems reasonable to expect that critics of devolution in public sector management will sharpen their analysis and attack. If on the grand national and international scale commitment to devolution falters then the education sector will be caught in the groundswell of reaction. In any event the Western Australian school system, because of its history and culture, will stay tilted for some time towards looking centrally for solutions to local problems.

If quality of education became a major political issue, then the restoration of the capacity for firm central responses to calls for action would appear much more decisive and effective than appears to local school decision-making groups. Under these circumstances it could be attractive and expedient for a government to restore the former central structures which were politically more responsive to centrally organized interest groups than the decentralized structures. However, the reconstruction of a compelling ideology of centralized management seems some years away: there should be several more years to demonstrate that devolution can work.

Another scenario is one where the restructuring proceeds on a pragmatic basis; elements that prove difficult to implement are deleted so that what is put into place is significantly modified. For example, if school-decision groups are

unable to influence key staffing decision/s, or if local decisions are vetoed centrally in the absence of clear parameters, or if no satisfactory way is found for the school to account for its performance, then the new paradigm will lack the power to replace the old. Governments may retreat from the commitment to devolution because in their judgement it is impossible to manage such a large school system on a decentralized basis. Organizational and political culture may win out. Whether or not this comes to pass will depend on the adroitness with which the implementation is managed from here on. The politics or organizational change will require careful attention if the reforms are to succeed.

A third scenario is one where the reforms are implemented principally at the level of rhetoric with the consequence that underneath the new language there is little change in practice. This seems to be the outcome of Swedish decentralization reforms of the 80's. (Ahs, 1986; Norrving and Sannevstedt, 1989). Old habits die hard; it is easier to learn a new language than to break established routines and patterns of influence. Even when practice changes sometimes it is directed towards refinement of the means without reference to the ends. It is conceivable that in Western Australia considerable effort could be invested in drafting corporate plans, participating in school councils, and writing reports so that they become additional tasks for schools to undertake without any real enhancement of capacity to get the job of teaching done better.

The best prediction is that the restructuring will continue on. The devolution apparatus will be developed, refined, and installed across all schools over the

new two years. Notwithstanding the difficult start and entrenched resistance the national momentum of devolution seems likely to carry the exercise through to at least a surface level of completion; by 1992 it should be possible to declare the devolution reform to have succeeded. But such a conclusion would be premature since the restructuring is only a means to an end. The real criteria for success should relate to outcomes. Are better educational decisions being made at the school level? Are the schools more responsive to their communities? Is it easier for schools to get things done? Has the professionalism of school staffs been enhanced and have their jobs become more fulfilling?

There is reason for guarded optimism in responding to these questions. The reforms will work when teachers see it in their interest that they work. So far Better Schools has been perceived by teachers as the Government's solution to its problems. There are signs that increasingly leaders in unions and professional associations are recognizing that devolution offers a means of achieving greater professional recognition, better remuneration, greater job satisfaction and more opportunities to shape the work place. Some of the same forces that stalled the implementation during the industrial strife in 1989 may now be galvanized in support of the reforms. There are real prospects that devolution will be perceived as the best strategy to advance the professional interest of teachers; the 'taint' of government control and economic management will become issues of receding importance. Once that realisation is widely held among teachers there will be no holding devolution back.

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